

REMARKS

The Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter of claim 18 is noted with appreciation.

Claims 1-3, 5-17 are pending in the application. Claims 4 and 18 have been canceled. Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate claims 4 and 18. Claim 5 has been amended to better define the claimed invention over the applied art of record. Amended claim 5 finds solid support in the original specification (page 12) and drawings (FIG. 5 at 47 and 56). No new matter has been introduced through the foregoing amendments.

Amended claim 1 now includes the allowable subject matter of claim 18 and should be allowed. Claims 2-3 and 16-17 should also be allowed at least by virtue of their dependency on claim 1.

Amended claim 5 now requires that the stretching step is performed after the bonding step, and with a sufficient stress to split the conjugate fibers up into split fibers of the types of thermoplastic synthetic resin, without splitting the conjugate fibers in the bonding zones where the conjugate fibers have been bonded to the first web. None of the applied references fairly teach or suggest this unique feature of the present invention.

Amended claim 5 should therefore be considered patentable. Claims 6-15 should also be considered patentable at least by virtue of their dependency on claim 5.

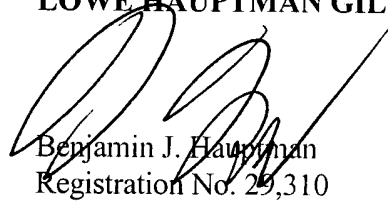
Each of the Examiner's rejections has been overcome. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are now in condition for allowance. Early and favorable indication of allowance is courteously solicited.

The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned, Applicant's attorney of record, to facilitate advancement of the present application.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 07-1337 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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